

Youth Smoking/Youth Anti-Smoking Education

These issues have arisen either in the draft report of the National Commission on Smoking and Public Policy (NCSPP) or in testimony before the commission.

- Better enforcement of bans on sales to minors -- draft report
- Increased penalties for selling to minors -- draft report
- Smoking bans in elementary and junior high schools -- draft report
- Smoking areas by vote in senior high schools, parental permission required -- draft report
- Mandated anti-smoking education in all schools -- forum recommendation
- Prohibition of teachers' smoking in schools and anywhere they can be seen by students -- forum recommendation
- Employment of teachers who do not smoke -- forum recommendation
- Government/industry code to promote smoking as "adult custom" -- draft report
- Industry influence applied with wholesalers and vending operators to discourage sales to minors -- draft report

There is no appropriate forum for discussing any American Cancer Society stand on anti-smoking education of youth and/or smoking areas in schools -- by students or teachers.

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The tobacco industry has traditionally avoided all semblance of promotion of cigarettes to youth -- smoking is an adult custom to be decided upon by mature persons who know there is a controversy.

And because of this policy we and our spokespersons would no more comment on such touchy topics as smoking rooms in schools and sales to minors than we would participate in a smoking and health debate with or for high school students.

We could, however, take a stand on what kind of education on cigarettes should be offered to the nation's youth. When the Congress passed the original warning label legislation, it declared that it was the policy of the Congress that the public "be adequately informed that cigarette smoking may be hazardous to health." (Emphasis supplied.)

Much of what passes today for so-called smoking education -- and it is required by law or board of education policy in more than two-thirds of the states -- is pure propaganda.

Some of the more egregious examples offered at the NCSPP forums have been culled and are ready at the Institute, should such be necessary in any reply to the Commission's release and news conference. Example: the Alabama civilian employee of the Army who has older youngsters build a doll's house, then burns it down, complete with dolls, in front of younger children to demonstrate how "you might be burned to death from someone else's cigarette."

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Also assembled and ready for use if necessary:

Contradiction on the age at which "education" should be offered

Contradiction on role of the church

Conflicting testimony on whether federal, state or local authorities should be responsible for anti-smoking education and criticism of existing state laws and carry-through

Opinion on ineffectiveness of any so-called education program

Claim of failure of the School Health Curriculum Project, demonstration program begun in the late 1960s by the National Clearinghouse on Smoking and Health

Testimony pro and con establishing smoking rooms or smoking areas in high schools. (A large majority of witnesses who mentioned them were adamantly opposed while others claimed they increased teen smoking, that they could not be policed properly, that youngsters could either forge parental permission slips or talk their parents into giving them permission. The school superintendent of Cook County, Ill., declared sanction of student smoking on school premises was "analagous to having a drug area or a cocktail lounge in our schools."

A 10th grader from Atlanta told the NCSPP that students who could not get parental permission theoretically could not smoke in the designated areas and "therefore there is

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still the problem of bathroom smokers. Smoking will never be controlled, especially in schools," she said.)

Material on which states do and which do not prohibit sales of cigarettes to minors. (Pennsylvania, for instance, defines minority as under 21 for all purposes except sale of tobacco. You can sell it to a 16-year-old in Pennsylvania, but not to a 15-year-old.)

Testimony suggesting that there are "a lot of hungry teachers," many out of work, so that nonsmoking could be one criterion for hiring.

There seems little point in retyping or duplicating all of the above material, unless and until there is decision that the industry can become involved in issues of youth smoking.

The nonsmoker teacher question is really not one for us, either, except perhaps as a cynical off-the-cuff comment by a spokesperson.

We do, of course, have a code promoting smoking as an "adult custom" (and perhaps should promote more). See the attached "Cigarette Industry Advertising Standards" blurb.

The notion that the cigarette manufacturers could influence wholesalers and vending machine operators "to discourage the sale of cigarettes to minors" is typical of an organization which doesn't know what it's talking about.

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